NEW YORK
AND OTHER POEMS

MARY DIXON THAYER

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By

MARY DIXON THAYER

Author of "SONGS OF YOUTH"

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To

E. A.

Who makes of
life itself a poem

The Author is indebted to the Editors of the following publications to reprint in this volume such of her work as has appeared in *Commonweal Magazine, Contemporary Verse, Poetry, The Catholic World, The Forum, The Literary Digest, The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Younger Set.*

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NEW YORK
AND OTHER POEMS

NEW YORK*

Come to me, children of men!
You will be stunned with wonder!
I am the City Gigantic!
I am the City of Thunder!

I am the City of Light!
I am the City of Darkness!
I am the City of Height!
I am the City of Starkness!

Come to me, children of men!
My towers lean into dawn.
Over my limbs restless hours
Creep into sunshine to spawn.

Above my head the universe
Breaks into billions of worlds;
Under the weight of my pavements
Sweetness of flowers is furled.

I am the City Tremendous!
I am the Way of Despair!
I am the first of your pleasures,
I am the last that is fair.

I am the shrine of desire!
I am the dream unregained—
Out of both starshine and mire
Was dipped the cup that I drained.

Come to me, children of men!
Plunge in my being and weep!
O! I can pierce you with living!
O! I can crush you with sleep!

*Awarded *Contemporary Verse* prize.

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Come to me, Youth of the Ages!
Come to me, clear-eyed and free!
I shall awake you and break you,
And make you suffer with me!

Out of the depths of my coffers,
Studded with diamonds and gold,
I will heap unto you offers—
Jewels of knowledge untold. . .

And you will know all my madness
Stinging your blood into flame,
And you will know all my sadness,
And you will know all my shame.

Come to me, States and Kingdoms!
Come to me, Empires yet wet
With the hot blood of soldiers!
Come to me! I can beget

Out of your corpses, a poem,
Out of your lusts, a play;
Out of your crumbled vastness
Wild laughter for a day!

Of Athens and of Babylon
And of Rome's majesties
I listen with a smile—behold!
I was—I am—all these!

Upon my breast the navies rest,
My limbs embrace the sea,
My people run from sun to sun
And eat the heart of me.

I swallow death. I breed on wars.
I hold, and I release.
I take and give. I live! I live!
And demand not surcease!

With energy, relentlessly,
My veins burst out;
Eternally, eternally,
I writhe about.

For life with so much surfeit flings
Itself on me
I cannot meet its lips nor greet
It passively.

I am the City Splendid,
The focus beyond time,
Unto me is descended
The pomp of every clime.

Within me yet the Cæsars
And all the Poets are,
The hates and loves of ages
I know, and scatter far.

Cruel and lovely, wanton,
Seductive, tender, sweet,
Magnificent and stupid,
Evasive, wise and fleet. . .

I am all things. I seek all things.
I draw all things to me.
I suck a human heart, and lo!
What it is, I can be!

Come to me, children of men!
Come to me, tired and bruised!
Come to me, eager and young!
Come to me, old, confused!

Come to me, Emperors, Princes!
Come to me, beggars and queens!
Come to me, murderers, idiots,
Poets, philosophers, fiends!

Out of your raptures and sorrows,
Out of your dim agonies,
I would contrive me tomorrows,
I would be sated with these!

Give me your hates and your horrors!
Give me your dreams and your youth!
Give me your bodies, though naked!
Give me your Gods and your Truth!

Give me your goodness and badness—
Give me whatever you are!
Neither your fineness nor lowness
Out of myself do I bar.

Court me or spurn me—I care not!
Stab me—caress me—I live!
I am the Best and Worst of you.
What you have given, I give.

AT DAWN

O World, you are too beautiful!
I cannot sing
The sudden glory of the spring—
I cannot tell in words the ways
Of summer through enchanted days. . .

O World, you are too beautiful!
Shadows and scents
And sounds—of these, your sacraments,
Mortals too carelessly partake.
O World, when will a Poet make

One song that fully utters you?
Ah, would that I
Might clasp your swiftness in a sigh,
Might brim your silence in a word,
Might speak what in the dawn is heard!

O World, you are too beautiful!
For pity press
Not closer in your loveliness
Against our hearts! Exquisite pain
Is in the sunshine, and the rain. . .

Slim grasses leaning on the wind,
And shining wings
Of butterflies, and little things
That happen in the leaves have power
To wound me as they wound a flower.

O World, O World, be temperate
In your caress!
Withdraw a little, Loveliness!

THE BRUSH

Whence comes the pow'r
Of Poesy?
The vagrant hour
Of ecstasy?

Not from my mind—
It only knows
That wonder comes,
And wonder goes.

Not from my heart—
It only seeks
In other hearts
That which it speaks.

There is a Mind
Above mine own.
There is a Heart
That beats alone.

There is a strange,
Sad Majesty
That whispers thought
Through thoughts, to me.

I am the brush
In a great Hand—
I move—and do
Not understand.

All things I do
Come from afar
Out of the depths
Of things that are,

And were, and shall
Be; so must I
Act, and yet know
Not how, nor why;

Dream, and not hope
Of a dream's end;
Dare—and not grope
To comprehend.

VISION

When I am dead I know . . . I know
The birds will sing, the winds will blow,
The stars will shine, the moon arise,
The sun drift, flaming, through the skies;
Flowers will bloom, and children sing,
And oceans laugh—and everything
Go on forever—timeless—glad—
I know . . . I know . . . and am not sad.

But will you, too, on that strange day
When I must follow, far away,
The law of a dim Destiny—
O will you too laugh without me?
And sing? And, heedless, live as though
I had not been? I know . . . I know. . .

A REPLY

The wind was very pale and sweet.
It came and knelt down at my feet.

The great dim clouds surged up and up
Like froth upon a brimming cup.

I stood and looked down at the sea,
And all the waves looked back at me.

"You are so young!" the big world said.
And I stood still, and bowed my head.

"You are so young!" the quick waves cried.
(Of course it could not be denied.)

And all the world—the sky—the sea
And earth echoed, reproachfully,

"You are so young! What can you know?"
I whispered: "Nothing . . ." and the slow,

Innumerable tread of years
Muffled in laughter and in tears

Blurred in my heart. "O World," I said,
"Tell me, what is it to be dead?"

But the waves answered, endlessly,
"We are, and do not cease to be."

I stretched my arms out to the sky—
"Ah, tell me what it is to die!"

But the clouds answered, "Death is rain.
We cease but to become again. . ."

Then the wind's lips against my cheek
Pressed words I know not how to speak—

Words clear and sudden, like a breath
Of dawn—"Child, child, there *is* no death!"

PRELUDE

Lilies, stretching your petals over the pond!
Bird, swaying on the tips of stiff grasses!
Silence, holding worlds in your arms!
Listen. . .

Little leaves, fluttering around white birches!
Yellow bees humming in sunny places!
Gawky, half-grown shadows! Listen. . .

Never before did I understand why you
Were beautiful, pale lily! Never before
Did I hear the thoughts of your song, O bird!
And silence was wearisome to me.

But now I know the rapture of a petal, as it unfolds.
And now I sing your song, O bird, in my heart. With
The little leaves I am excited, and I tremble. And
With the yellow bees I am sleepy, and content.
I have learned how to play with shadows—because
I am in love.

SONG

Love came so near to me today—
So near—so very near!
I almost heard him stoop and say
"Hush . . . I am here. . ."

I almost felt him touch my hand;
Almost, upon my lips,
I felt a kiss—yet now I stand
Alone; time slips

Over my heart. It was a dream
Perhaps . . . I cannot say. . .
And yet so near—so very near—
Seemed Love, today!

FOR A FRIEND

Men think I love your eyes, your hair,
Your voice—and seeing you so fair

Do never wonder that I find
In you such solace for my mind

And heart. But this, none ever guess—
It is not all your loveliness

Of form—all that which visibly
Attracts, that is your charm, for me.

But something far more sweet and true
Than accidents of time, are you;

And what I love is that which lies
Beyond the laughter of your eyes,

Beyond the beauty of your face—
A something full of inward grace,

A something ardent, vivid, pure,
Fragile—though infinite, and sure;

For this I love you; and I know
I love what may not ever grow

Old—what will not slip away
Nor can diminish, nor decay.

SILENCES

I sing the song of Silences.

Silences of ponds
Where Dawn commences;
Of forests, and of curling fronds
Of fern;

Sunsets, and hours of the night
When nothing stirs. . .
Stars burn
Through pointed firs. . .

Silences of white rains that fall
On opened fields;
Silence that shrouds
Death, and of all
That creeps around our life; of clouds,
Dreams, spectres, loves and faiths—what yields
Us consciousness of Something fair,
Transfused and vibrant everywhere.

I sing the song of words unsaid;
And lingerings
Of lovers; songs of tears unshed
I sing; of gestures, glances, smiles,
And things
That might have been;
Instants between
Chords. Wings
Of vivid birds through summer's day . . .
Vague flutterings . . .
Thoughts of a lonely child at play. . .

I sing the song of spaces,
And of sky.
I sing the song of faces
That pass by.

TO ———

The ultimate and lovely You
Eludes me. That which is most true

And intimate and dear I miss
Under the rapture of our kiss.

And when you smile and touch my hand—
Ah, even then I know you stand

Far off, where only angels tread,
And I must pass with bended head.

You move in beauty like a star.
Silence is music where you are.

AT PARTING

Yes, there will come a day when, standing
Upon the brink of Time,
I shall half turn, reluctantly,
To wave adieu—to see
The meadows starred with little flowers
We loved and touched in other hours;
And the hills we climbed with laughter . . .
And trees, and the shadows of trees . . .
And clouds, and the shadows of clouds . . .
And I shall feel the little breeze
That walks at dusk . . .

But I shall wait until you pass
With eager footsteps o'er the grass.
Then, looking up, I shall see God
Through sudden tears,
And He will say "Come! Follow me
Beyond the years . . ."

DUSK

Over the young trees leans the sky,
Tender and frail.
A farmer boy is passing by,
Swinging his pail.

The little faces of the stars
Peer suddenly
Between the sun's tremendous bars
Down—down at me.

The bosom of the earth is full
Of tiny sighs.
The Angel of the Dark glides past,
With shadowed eyes.

O God, O God, how high it is—
Thy world—and deep!
How little will I know it ere
I fall asleep!

VOICES

Listen! You will hear the trees
Speaking little words to one another—
Little words of happiness and of love,
Of wonder, and of sadness, and pride . . .
Listen! You will hear their thoughts;
Wait! You will learn unknown things . . .

There is the Poplar tree speaking . . .
See! She is slim, and very tall . . .
See! She is proud, and very young . . .
(She is a maiden unaware
That men are mad with her beauty)
Listen, O listen to the Poplar tree!
These are the words of her heart. . .

"Lean, lean my sisters, on the wind!
Is not the wind our lover?
Bow, bow your heads to him, my sisters!
Shake out your ruffled skirts, and bow!
Tremble, my little sisters—tremble!
Is not the wind cold and careless?
Does not the wind come running past us,
Laughing, and tossing back his yellow curls?
Hush . . . how can we draw him to us?
Hush . . . how can we teach him love?

Lean, my little sisters, on the wind!
O bow down your heads, and wait!
Soon he must feel our slender sweetness—
Soon he must grow warm, and kiss our lips!"
And listen! these are the words
Of the Willow tree down by the river . . .

"Lost . . . lost . . . lost . . .
Hinted, faint blue promises of blossom . . .
Radiant, dream petalled tendernesses . . .
Stretch out your arms, my saddened comrades,
Writhing with the sense of emptiness . . .
Stretch out your arms, and sigh . . .
Lost . . . lost . . . lost . . .
Something, infinitely lovely . . .
Something, infinitely strange. . ."
And listen! These are the words
Of the Pine tree upon the mountain:

"Ho! Clouds and stars!
Ho! Peaks and spaces!
Ho! Dawns and sunsets,
Depths, lower depths, and heights!

Leap about my feet, ye torrents!
Lash me to the earth, ye winds!
And with keen shafts of sudden fire
Assail me, all ye lancers of the storm!
Ho!
What do I care?
I am I!"

SUMMER

O ecstasy to touch the wings
Of butterflies! To kiss
A violet's petals one by one,
And breathe a flower's bliss!

O ecstasy to lie beneath
A tree whose arms enfold
The slim white bodies of young clouds
That yet escape this hold!

Who has not touched a butterfly
With love, nor kissed a flower,
Nor lain beneath a tree and learned
The secret of its power . . .

Who has not wakened with the dawn,
Nor run with eager feet
Across the meadows deep in light
Where God and silence meet—

Who has not lifted up his face
To the fervent caress
Of little winds, and trembled from
Excess of loveliness—

He has not lived, or living, has
Passed over listlessly
Exquisite pages in the book
Of life and destiny.

APRIL

I had forgotten how the wind
Comes down across the hills
In early spring, frail, whispering . . .
And how the valley fills
With pale blue shadows, and the scent
Of something sweet and indolent. . .

I had forgotten how the trees
Atiptoe stand, and how
The shiny, many tinted leaves
Burst from each tiny bough . . .
I had forgotten that the sky
Could ever be as blue,
Or that the beauty of the world
Utters, forever, you.

O once we wandered, hand in hand,
These lovely roads along,
And then we thought to understand
The very angels' song,
And then we did not greatly care
If skies were dark or clear—
Or if the world was beautiful—
Our secret was more dear—

A secret that our hearts had learned
To treasure, each in each,
A beauty that the eye, the ear,
The lips could never reach.
Possessing this, what did we care
If earth were hideous, or fair?

But now, alone, I tread the ways
Of April's swift, enchanted days . . .
Was your heart April? Is that why
You gave it—and then hurried by?

IN SPRING

These vibrant woodlands beat against
My heart insistent things . . .
And all the world is tremulous, as though an angel's wings
Touched it to splendor, and passed by;
A thrush is singing, and the sky
Is blue—I think Our Lady's dress
Casts on it that pale loveliness.

Out of the leafless dogwood trees
A thousand blossoms break
In breathless sweetness. Petals slake
Their thirst for sunshine, opening
With soundless fervor. Branches fling
Dark arms, green garlanded, above,
And the earth whispers "God is Love . . ."

TRANSMISSION

If in our thought there dwells a Force
That conquers space,
If but to love—though far apart—
Is to draw near apace . . .
If for the language of a heart
Not time, nor voice,
Nor instrument, nor art, nor place
Is needful—if no choice
Of human law, no destiny
Can aid, or interfere . . .
Then must you, far away, love me
As I love, here.

TO A BEGGAR

Sometimes, along the street where I
Walk gaily, with my head held high,
And youth beating within my breast
The rhythm of an endless quest . . .

Sometimes I come upon you there
In the deep-shadowed corner where
You sit—crouched forward—beaten—blind—
Staring with eyes that cannot find

The light—groping with hands too old
To seek or do, to make or hold . . .
And then I pause, and all my dreams
Fall back upon my heart. Life seems

A strange and cruel, futile thing.
Why is it given me to sing,
To gather blossoms, laugh, and know
Love's rapture—and to you to go

Sightless and broken along ways
Unpitied and through vacant days . . . ?
Why are Life's gifts cast at my feet—
All that is magical and sweet,

While you are left—poor twisted Mask—
To grope unceasingly, to ask
Of strangers bread but to prolong
Your agony, as Youth and Song

And Love and Love's high court goes by—
Tossing you pennies for a sigh?
Ah! In that other fairer land
That you shall enter—may you stand

Erect beside the King of kings
And ask of Angels, angel things!
And may you look with laughing eyes
Down all the roads of Paradise!

Then shall I, humbly, lift my face
To yours, and take my rightful place,
And cry "Oh Beggar-Man, please be
My friend, and speak to God for me!"

TO A FRIEND

How unutterably far
You are!
Even when you draw near, I know
You stand where I can never go . . .

How unutterably fair—
Your hair!
And I am sure that when you smile
The angels also do awhile!

There is a something vaguely sweet
And fleet,
And beautiful, and true, and frail
In you—I love to watch your pale

Young face—I would guess each thought
That's caught
An instant in your mind and heart;
Blunderingly I play my part.

And but in this alone I'm wise—
I prize
In you not that which I can see,
But what eludes and saddens me.

AUTUMN

A leaf, in falling, touched my cheek.
It said "I love you. Do not speak . . ."

A crow flew by, flapping his wings;
He coughed, and said outrageous things . . .

The heads of the trees were bent down—
Each was a princess with a crown

Of gold; each wore a different dress
And blushed at her own loveliness.

A tiny river heedlessly
Rushed past, enamoured of the sea;

The oaks stretched their brown arms aloft
To clasp the sky, blue eyed and soft,

And the blood in the oak tree's veins
Splotched the sky's breast with crimson stains.

A branch said, with a little sigh,
"Thou too may'st learn of us—to die."

IN A PULLMAN

The solemn people in the train
Lie back and sleep, or keep
Eyes upon books . . .
Meanwhile, beyond the windowpane,
The lovely world runs by—
Sun-tinged, with flowers in her hair,
And shining plumes ablow—how fair,
How young she looks!

O sleepy people in the train
Awake! Break through the windowpane!

Mountains and fields and lakes and streams,
A flash of ocean and of dreams,
And curving roads, and tumbled hills,
And white smoke crumpled into frills;
And villages and factories,
And the delicious tops of trees,
And romping shadows, and the brown
Houses of a little town;
And children playing in a street,
And wind-stirred, grey-toned swamps . . . O fleet,

O visionary world
Seen from the windows of a train
And loved and lost, and found again!
O beauty hurled
Back upon beauty!
Sunlight slanting on the ground,
And waves that crush, without a sound,
And birds that rush against a sky
Pale blue, flowing forever by!

How can the people in a train
Fall sound asleep, or only look
Into the pages of a book
When all the world (In vain! In vain!)
Is beating on the windowpane?

REGRET

It is a little sad, I think,
That though, when first we met
Our spirits touched—yet now apart
They move—and we forget

The loveliness of broken things,
The shadow-hands that drew
Us on, the far-off sound of wings,
And what was almost true.

It is a little sad that we
(So close to Paradise!)
Should lose our way, and stumble past
The gates with blinded eyes.

BEAUTY

What is Beauty but this—
The tremor of a leaf as it falls . . .
The curve of a fruit-laden tree—
A bird in the sky that calls . . .
And the instant of a lover's kiss?

What is Beauty? A sea
Swelling in delicious undulation,
Reflecting all itself with adulation.

Beauty is tepid summer rain,
And sudden, inexplicable delights
Of little leaves upon a rain-soaked bough . . .
Sounds of wood and meadow; and the stain
Of flowers in remote, untrodden places . . .
Perfume blowing vaguely . . . and dim nights . . .
And Beauty is in songs, and passing faces,
And in all dreams that touch, far off, and now. . .

TO A CHILD

I leaned above you as you slept;
I knelt; I kissed your eyes.
You never knew—but angels flew
Down out of Paradise.

They gathered round us in the gloom,
They bent over your bed;
They whispered far-off, shining things,
And their wings touched your head.

You and the angels—somewhere, God—
I knelt; I tried to pray . . .
A radiance drew round us, swept
My heart. I longed to say

Swift, snowy things, fragile and sweet—
Things that I used to know—
But I had lost the gift of words
And could not pray. The slow,

Vast minutes passed. My lips were mute.
I knelt. I kissed your eyes.
Ah, but God hears unspoken words
Somewhere in Paradise!

IN A RAILWAY STATION

Crowds were round us, but I knew
That I was alone with you.

Strangers passed us; strangers' eyes
Stared at us without surprise.

Voices chattered, whistles blew;
Still, I was alone with you!

In that huge, unquiet place,
I looked only at your face;

In that crowded waiting room,
Through the dustiness and gloom,

The swift laughter of your eyes
Turned it into Paradise.

Little did the strangers know
What was in our hearts, and so,

Passing on, without surprise,
They passed out of Paradise.

CONTENTMENT

Breath of the cool, soft earth,
And leaves that fall;
Sounds of the quiet wood,
And birds that call . . .
Freshness of flowers wet
With golden dew;
Thoughts that are mingled yet
With thoughts of you . . .
Silence that overflows
Against pale skies;
Gladness of what is close,
And lives and dies . . .

Bendings of little trees,
Flashings of sun;
Shadows that twist and seize
Shadows, and run . . .
Waves that stretch up and out,
And break, and cry . . .
Clouds that walk round about
A summer sky—
Laughter of children heard
From far away;
Dreams that are only stirred
At end of day—
All, in one instant of
Time, I possess!
Tell me, than God Himself
Have I much less?

THOUGHTS AT EVENING

Through the forest, huge and still,
I went.
My footsteps crunched the glittered snow.
Trees bent
Their queenly heads, snow-crowned, and kept
Their arms around me.
Overhead
A little moon, pale gold, floated,
And the blue veils of twilight swept,
Blurring mine eyes . . .

"O God!" I whispered, "thank You for
These things!
Thanks for the purple-shadowed snow
That brings
Silence! For trees—slim, full of pride—
Whose dreams surround me!
Thanks for stars!
And for the dusk, and for those bars
Of splendor flinging clouds that hide
Your Paradise!"

SOLILOQUY

Here on the hillside, youth and I
Learning the way of a summer sky . . .

And ever the grasses curve and stir,
And the wind leaps in delight;
And ever the head of a trembling fir
Is bent like a maid's, at night.
And the sigh of the yearning earth runs through
The melody of my heart,
And life is a song, and the sky is blue,
And the soft clouds sift apart . . .

Here on the hillside, youth and I,
Standing alone and still,
Here on the brink of shining things,
Here on a windy hill!

And ever dim branches stretch, and sway,
And their arms are bare and long,
And they fold us around, and without a sound
Hold us fast and strong.

Taut on the hillside, youth and I,
Bound to the heart of a tree,
Lashed with the sadness born of a sigh—
Fettered with mystery . . .

But after awhile I must rise, and go
Down through the mist to the deep,
And youth will lean on the breast of the hill,
And call to me—and weep . . .

LEARNING

How can I tell what I learned
Sitting by you, today?
How can I put your wisdom
Into the words I say?

That which you taught, in silence,
Can I in silence teach?
Or of your beauty, speaking,
Can I contrive one speech?

For as I sat beside you
We did not speak a word—
Yet of life's deepest meaning
You surely spoke. I heard.

The flowers in the garden
Atiptoe stood; the trees
Quivered; slim, fragrant tendrils
Of wood-vine swept our knees.

The sun, with far-off laughter,
Poked gold into your hair,
But in your eyes were shadows
I had not known were there.

So still we sat, the roses
Forgot, and turned away;
But all the other flowers
Had secret things to say.

I thought I heard a violet
Whisper, under our feet,
Something too frail and lovely
For me to dare repeat—

I thought I saw a daisy
Demurely nod her head,
And stoop, and answer swiftly—
I felt the things she said . . .

And all the while beside you
I clearly understood
That God had heard the flowers,
And that He is good . . .

AT EVENING

O strange and sweet and muted sounds
Of summer nights!
O fragrance gushing wavelessly!
O dim delights!
O trembling tips of star-touched trees!
O amorous, O eager breeze!

World, World, I love thee! Yet thou art
From human love withdrawn, apart . . .
Thou dost not pity if we fall,
Thou dost not answer if we call,
And when we clasp Death's hand and go,
Thou dost not care . . . thou dost not know . . .

DIVINATION

It is the time when violets peep
In sunny places out;
And bloodroot blossoms, half asleep,
Stand up and look about.

It is the time when trees put on
New dresses, crisply clean;
And meadows—tremblingly aware—
Draw o'er them sheets of green . . .

This time I know! For though I walk
A dusty city street,
The sky is blue, and strangely through
My heart blow faintly sweet,

Far off, dimly remembered things—
Things tremulously young—
And noise and dust and mortar are
But curtains, loosely hung

Between the magic of the Spring
And my time-darkened eyes—
Along the edges I can peep
Into earth's Paradise.

So God, who draws before our souls
The draperies of sense,
Yet leaves a crack through which we gaze
On His magnificence.

SONG

Where you have been the lilies blow
More thickly, and the grass is sweet
Where you have touched it with your feet.

Where you have been and where you go
The world is fair—so fair!
Your laughter trembles in the air.

Where you have been I wander, and
The lilies and the grass
Utter your beauty as I pass . . .

Even the blind clouds understand
What loveliness by those is seen
Who walk where you are, or have been.

SWIMMING AT NIGHT

The moon is up. Beyond the pines,
Between the trunks of trees, it shines.

The world is black, shadowed with gray,
And stars burst out and float away.

I know not if my life is real.
All things are vague and sweet. I steal

Down to the beach. Here ripples sigh
Against the world, and dreams go by.

The dark, smooth waves push out, and soar,
And reach pale hands to touch the shore.

There is a faint, quaint, broken sound—
Like hearts that beat—and all around

Tall silence stoops and watches me.
Time falls. Worlds wait expectantly.

I stand alone upon the brink
Of endless things, and dare not think . . .

Strange shadows curl about my feet,
And little winds—cautious and fleet—

Dance round me like a faerie band
Of things I do not understand.

I loose my clothes. They drop away.
I slip among the waves. I lay

My cheek on their white cheeks; I drift
Through golden ice where moonbeams shift

And sweep and break, and sink and rise;
I turn my face up to the skies

And laugh. The hills stand queerly out
Along the world; the young waves shout;

The forest lifts its head and speaks
In whispers to the star-tipped peaks;

And all beneath and over me
The water, soft and velvety,

Folds and holds and binds with green lace
My body, then kisses my face.

TO ANYONE WHO IS LOVED
FROM
ANYONE WHO LOVES

You taught me Beauty suddenly,
I know not how . . .

Yet this I know—you passed me by
Quickly, and now

I understand dim, lovely things
I never knew . . .

Unutterable thoughts I learned,
Looking on you.

You taught me Beauty unaware,
And went your way.

The shadows deepen here, but where
You are is day.

THE WANDERING MINSTREL

I think I hardly knew how glad
And mad and strange and sweet
Is life—until one day there came
A minstrel down our street.

He was not dressed in silver lace,
Nor in a suit of red,
He did not have a handsome face,
Nor plumes upon his head.

To look at him you'd never guess
He was a Troubadour,
Nor that he stood upon the brink
Of Hope, guarding the door.

And yet, as he came down our street,
Singing an old, old song,
The children crowded round his feet,
And windows that had long

Been barred, flew open—heads appeared—
And all grew queerly still . . .
O ragged, modern Troubadour
What is your magic, still?

The sunlight slants from the blue sky,
The wind blows softly, and
The people laugh as you go by . . .
I wonder—is the Land

You sing of very far away?
And shall I ever see
Beyond the dimness of Today
Into Eternity?

And how is it that you, who are
Only a Beggar, know
Such wise, sweet things, and scatter dreams
For pennies as you go?

SANCTUARY

Something so secret and so true
Are you!

I seek, and yet I cannot find
The meaning that my soul divined
Dwells in

The quiet beauty of your smile
And gestures. But, once in a while,
I see

Something swift and young and sweet
In your eyes when our eyes meet;
It is

Something that passes—frail, yet strong—
Too lovely to be captured long—
(Too late,

Perhaps, am I?) And yet I seek,
And listen, lest perhaps you speak . . .
Ah wait . . .

The shadows darken, and I know
You move where I can never go . . .
So high

You hear an angel if he sings;
Sometimes you stoop, and touch his wings,
And sigh . . .

PARIS

O behold me! I am fair!
See the roses in my hair!
See the roses in my gown!
Love me! Do not ever frown!

If my white arms strangle you,
If my whispers are untrue—
Does it matter? Still you dare
Kiss the roses in my hair!

O behold me! Where the Seine
Would enfold me—on a plain
Nourished with the blood of men
I have spread my bed, and when

You would know me come at night,
Softly, feeling your delight—
Swiftly, lest your youth depart
Ere my lips have touched your heart.

Seek me all along the Seine,
Seek me where the shadows stain
The white pebbles under trees
Standing in the Tuilleries.

Seek me down the silvered halls
Of the Louvre where Time appalls
Sense with beauty horribly
Heaped on self—seek there for me!

And in my Cathedrals seek,
And in dreams my Poets speak,
And in every wood and field
Seek for me! At last I'll yield

Unto you (O I am fair!
There are roses in my hair!)
Where pale fountains leaning, blow
On the wind, I love to go . . .

Seek me in the gilded haunt
Of my Kings, where now a gaunt
Silence stalks, and emptiness;
Seek me where dainty hours press

Sweetly on old gardens—seek
Everywhere, and do not speak . . .
I would have you silently
Seek for me . . . seek for me . . .

In my streets strange millions tread
Joyously upon my Dead—
But you must forever know
That you cannot find me so.

You must come at dusk to me,
Without laughter, quietly,
And your footsteps here above
Must not wound the Dead I love.

You will learn that in my breast
There are passions not at rest—
But you shall not ask of me
Less than my divinity.

MEDITATION

I stood upon a little hill
And loved the world—a world so still—
So still I thought I heard its heart
Shaking the blades of grass apart . . .

I paused beneath a cherry tree;
Blackbirds objected, there, to me.

I ran away, and the cool breath
Of earth dashed on my cheeks. O death
Was but a silly nonsense rhyme
Beginning "Once upon a time . . ."

Poplars lifted thin arms and prayed,
And, lost in ecstasy, they swayed;
And close to them I knelt and said
"God, is it true I will be dead?"

A crow flew by, his long stiff wings
Flapping . . . delicious murmurings
Trembled along the grasses' tips.
I touched a shadow with my lips.

TO A POPLAR

O Poplar! Do you know
I am watching you through my window?
Do you know that I see you leaning
Upon the shoulder of the wind?
O Poplar, do you know?

Yet the wind is cold and old.
Can you not wait, O Poplar,
For the eager wind of spring?
Can you not wait for the wind
That will run to you, open armed,
And kiss your frozen eyes,
And kiss your stiffened fingers?

O Poplar, for shame! For shame!
Can you not wait for your lover?

I am watching you through my window.
I witness your betrayals.
O Poplar, stand erect!
Recover your dignity!

Poplar unrobed and lovely,
Slim, and tremulous with dreams—
O Poplar, do you know
How beautiful you are?

Do you know I am jealous of the wind—
Even of the wind of winter?
Do you know that I long to be
Any wind, or the sky, or the earth—
That as wind I might hold you in my arms—
The tumultuous sweetness of your branches,
The insistent, mute ardours of your tips?
That I might, as a cloud, lean over you,
And as gently give you my soul?
Or that, as the earth, I might feel you
Drawing from my life your life,
Imbibing your strength from my strength,
Exploring my heart for your delights?

O Poplar, I am jealous of the wind!
Jealous of the sky, and of the earth!

TO THE WORLD

What is it to you, O world,
That your arms are full of flowers?
What is it to you that they
Fade with the fading hours?

What do you care if a bird
That sang in the dusk is still?
Or are you aware, O World,
April is on the hill?

Ah, but to us—but to us—
Fragrance of flowers in the grass,
Songs of a bird at dusk,
And Aprils—to us, who pass,

All these are dear, O World,
And passionately true!
Pity the hearts that love
And crumble into you . . .

AT NIGHT

With your oar touch the lake
Quietly, or it will break.

See the little ripples spread!
See the big stars overhead!

See the mountains and trees float
Upside down under the boat!

Throw your head back and just stare
Up and up—for worlds are there—

Millions of them—dipped in sun
When God made such things for fun!

Do not speak. Tonight I know
What love is and why, and so

You need only touch my hand
Silently. I'll understand.

TO A TOURIST

Is it Beauty that you seek,
O Traveler?
Is it Beauty you would find?
But Beauty lives within the mind
And heart of man. Forbear to peer
Down distant roads! Beauty is near.

Do you think that in strange lands,
On tropic seas . . .
She is more fair—more real?
O Wanderer! When will you feel
The breath of Beauty in the air,
And touch her garment, everywhere?

O restless feet! O tired eyes
Seeking afar
That which slumbers in the grass
Beneath your footsteps as you pass,
That which to an instant clings
And dwells in little, common things!

EGYPT

[Valley of the Kings]

Pale gold cliffs and
Warm gold sand, and
Little donkeys
Where they stand

In the blue shade
Of hanging rocks.
Heat and silence,
And endless flocks

Of vultures that
Circle o'erhead—
It is the Valley
Of the Dead.

Tread rev'rently
All ye who dare
Enter this place—
All ye who stare

With curious eyes
Upon the things
Within the Valley
Of the Kings!

The Pharaohs here
Were laid to rest,
And humbler millions
The far quest

Of Timelessness
Began. These stones
Crush into earth
Their tears, their groans . . .

The very sand
Is here the dust
Of majesty.
The cactus thrust

Between the rocks
Draws nourishment
From royal corpse
And document.

Valley of Tombs!
Valley of Kings!
Valley of strange
Forgotten things!

Pale Vale of Death
Whose memories
Stretch into countless
Centuries!

How long you clasped
With stony face
The secrets of
A mighty race!

How long with lips
Of stone tight sealed,
You dreamed strange dreams
Yet unrevealed!

Valley of Thought!
Do you recall
The thundrous sound
Of Thebes? The tall

Gold temples there
Beyond the Nile,
That flashed the dawn
Mile unto mile?

Do you recall
Divinities
Unknown to us?
And centuries

Filled with the shouts
And blood of men
Now buried in
Yourself? Ah, then

You watched the long
Processions sway
Out of Karnak
Across the way;

You smiled, perhaps,
Knowing that all
Splendor and strength
At last must fall . . .

Thebes, with Carthage
And Babylon
Be but a name—
And now, upon

Your face is yet
That fearful grin,
For in your heart—
Deep, deep within,

Lies what is left
Of Egypt's might—
Shrivelled Pharaohs
Packed into bright

Carved coffins, with
About them laid
The golden things
To which they prayed.

There in your heart,
Valley of Tears,
Beneath the weight
Of dust and years

They lie! O pause,
Who would profane
Their slumber! From
All theft refrain!

In awe depart,
Nor dare to break
The seals that time
And sadness make!

SCHOOL

O have you ever kissed the world
When it was warm and sweet?
Or have you felt the summer break
In fragrance 'neath your feet?

Or have you ever stood alone,
Deep in a forest place,
And laughed to feel young branches touch
Caressingly your face?

Or have you ever wandered through
Untrodden ways, adream,
And knelt, and laid your burning cheek
Against a mountain stream?

Or have you stood quite still, quite still,
Gazing into the sky—
Loving its shadows and its lights
And its clouds blowing by?

Somehow, in quiet valleys where
The days are hushed—like sighs—
And flowers live their little lives
'Mid dreams and butterflies. . .

Where trees, with gestures unrestrained,
Speak secret things at night,
And life is something glad and strange,
And sad and swift and slight. . .

O it is there, I think, that all
The roads of learning end,
And it is there true Wisdom is
Our wisdom to transcend.

TO THE WIND

Wind! Blowing carelessly, riotously!
Filling all the world with rippling splendor,
Filling all the universe with sighs—
Wind—O Wind!

Running on the hearts of little flowers,
Bending down the meadows with a smile,
Leaning on the waves and calling . . . calling . . .
Wind—O Wind!

Making little stirrings in the grasses—
Little faint blue harmonies—crescendoes—
Tiny singing notes and swinging chords—
Wind—O Wind
For all your magic
You cannot blow the dreams out of my heart!

TRANSMUTATION

Because you are—because I know
Somewhere your footsteps press
This earth, and words enchanted, low,
In your voice are spoken . . .
Because all of life's loveliness
With you—somewhere—unbroken—
Is still most strangely, clearly true—
Knowing all this, since knowing you,
My heart is radiantly aware
Of sudden beauty everywhere.

TO THE WISE

You who are wise—O! Tell me this—
Why is there wisdom in the kiss
Of winds?

You who are learned, tell me why
There is such learning in the sky
At dawn?

You who have read so many books
Explain to me why summer brooks
Are glad!

Or show me where that beauty lies
Beyond the reach of human eyes,
Yet near . . .

O shadows crush my heart! I know
Not anything but that I go
Alone.

The answers that you find in books
Content not either summer brooks
Nor me . . .

And you can never, never tell
Us what we yearn to know who dwell
Apart.

How vain to ask you to explain
Life's sweetness that dissolves in pain!
Farewell . . .

FOREST-SKETCH

I ran between the laughing trees.
Against my face a little breeze
Swept, cold and sweet, and the snow fell,
And what I was I could not tell.

For to myself I seemed an air—
A swiftness—going everywhere!
I was the laughter of the trees,
The snow, the earth; I was the breeze;
I was all sadness and delight;
And I was day. And I was night.

I sang aloud, and my whole song
Was new, and yet it held a throng
Of echoes gathered from all things,
And what I sang the forest sings.

And with a pressure tender, fleet,
I touched the great world with my feet.
I touched a tree trunk with my hand;
I cried "O! Now I understand!"
But what it was I understood
I know not, but that it was good.

Gently, out of the broken skies,
Upon my cheeks, my lips, mine eyes—
Snowflakes—unuttered words of Him
I love—swift messages so dim,
So fraught with sweetness and distress
I wept to know their mute caress.

The tall Pines shuddered, and a crow
Flew past. Its shadow stained the snow.
I cried "O Silence, speak to me!"
Then fled a murmur, tree to tree,
And the world raised her lovely head;
"Hush, do not waken Time," she said.

SEQUENCE

Comes over me sometimes a sense
Of the absurd evanescence

Of things. Then do I gaze with eyes
Made spiritual, and in surprise

Perceive in all that to us seems
Reality, a weft of dreams.

A flower is a mystery
Beyond our thought; the earth, the sea,

The wind, and all that lives and dies
Baffles the more I scrutinize.

My very body which I feel
Circle my being, is unreal.

Soon it will stiffen and decay,
And with the dust be swept away.

The world and all the universe
At last will crumple and disperse.

What matters time? A million years
In sleep were as an instant. Tears

And laughter, song, and wisdom heard
Enunciated word on word—

These are but echoes, these will cease
Yet other echoes to release.

Empires begin and empires fall,
And generations vanish; all

That is moves out into a Plan
Whose rumpled edges contain Man.

That which we touch is shadow here,
Systems in System disappear.

FOR MUSIC

Flowers, living for a day,
Fade, giving of their lives away.

As a flower you will die
Unseen and tremulous—but I,

Passing on the road, will bless
The perfume of your loveliness.

THE SEARCH

Always in you I seek for more
Than I can ever find;
Always I think a little door
Will open in my mind
To let the loveliness of you
Blow through . . .

I wait and wait. I never know
When I shall feel the queer
Delicious sense of you, the low,
Sweet message 'she is near'.
Of many things I cannot talk.
I walk

Along the path you sometimes tread,
And there, reverently,
Stand still and wait, and bow my head.
Once, unexpectedly,
I heard—as you went quickly by—
A sigh . . .

UNSPOKEN

It is because I love you I am
Silent . . .
It is because I love you, you laugh
At me.

O! I cannot tell my love!

Flowers know it, and clouds;
Twilight knows it, and dawn;
A bird knows it, and sings
In dim places my love for you.

I alone cannot tell it.
I leave its telling to a bird.

IN REPLY

I am content thus in your thoughts
Sometimes, an hour, to live.
I am content if, through your dreams—
(So fair, so fugitive!)

I sometimes pass, as longings pass
That cannot be fulfilled—
As visions pass, of Youth, of Love—
As songs pass, and are stilled.

I am content only to be
A shadow swept between
The instants of your life—a strange
Dim figure, dimly seen.

HYMN OF THE PARTHENON *

Still am I beautiful! O ye
Who pass—look up! Look up, and see
And love! Now have two thousand years
Wounded my heart, and dust and tears
And blood of warriors has splashed
My limbs—fury of cannon crashed
Against my body; Youth has died
Defending me, who was the pride
Of Greece! But now alone, alone,
I stand, yet in my every stone
Feel yet the touch of Pericles,
And I retain long memories
Of Gods and men, and I possess
Swift dreams of vanished Loveliness.

Still am I beautiful! O ye
Who come to scorn—look well at me!
Behold! Out of my clinging arms
They wrenched my Gods! In mock alarms
They tore the figures from my frieze
And bore them over sighing seas
To men I know not, who would glut
Themselves upon my beauty. Cut
From off my fingers are my rings;
Smudged is my gown. All priceless things
That Greece, in silence, rev'rently
Cast at my feet, are lost to me.

Where are those sparkling heaps of gems?
White ropes of pearls? And diadems?
Where—the Immortals who once stood
Within my sanctuaries? Could
Ye then not even leave me these—
Mad Strangers from across the seas?

*Received honorable mention in competition for Browning Medal.

Yet do ye strip me all in vain!
Still am I beautiful! Profane
My body! Pierce it! Bruise it! See!
Ye cannot ever coarsen me!
Erect I stand, and weep; though shorn
Of treasure, yet I do not mourn
As much for this indignity
As for your own barbarity.
O! I have known other hours!
A Nation garlanded with flow'rs!
And Poets' songs within my shade
For all eternity were made!
Have I not looked, in other days,
On Beauty in a thousand ways?

Think ye I know not what ye are
Who come to taunt me from afar?
Think ye, within my heart of hearts,
In all my lovely, secret parts,
I do not know that ye are fools
Who stoop to steal another's tools
Ere ye can hope to dream, or make
What is less fine than, here, ye break?
Come! Violate me! Carry down
My ornaments into the town
And load your vessels! Sail away!
(Still what I am doth stay! Doth stay!)

Thus is your effort null—your toil
A silly frenzy to despoil
Beauty of beauty. Learn, at last,
You cannot take from me—the Past!
Still am I beautiful! The sea
Reaches, with longing, up to me;
The purple hills, just as of yore,
Kneel, worshipping; the stars adore
Me through the quiet nights. I stand
Alone, adream. My bleeding hand
Touches the withered cheek of Greece,
And in my saddened heart is—Peace.

NOCTURNE

Too dim for tears—too swift and dim—
These half-discernèd things
That touch the soul and vanish on
Unseen and soundless wings!
Too dim for tears—too strange and fleet—
Too faint for utterings!

Lo! Through the open night the moon
Looks down, unmoved, afar . . .
And in her unbound hair is caught
The glory of a star . . .
The wind is hushed with summer sounds,
And somewhere roses are . . .

Why are you sad? You know not why . . .
Nor I . . . thought cannot reach
The dream whence knowledge is, and we
Are wiser thus, and each
Knows, though he knows not how, what lies
Deeper than thought, or speech . . .

HEAVEN

Will there be in Heaven
An old crumbling wall
Over which red roses—
Like dim music—fall?

Will there be in Heaven
Slender Poplar trees
Leaning on the bosom
Of a little breeze?

Will there be in Heaven
Yellow butterflies . . . ?
Trembling meadow-grasses?
And star-broken skies?

Will there be in Heaven
Sudden daffodils
Blowing in the sunshine
Upon fragrant hills?

Yes! For would the Maker
Of all things that are
Cast out of His presence
Flowers, or a star?

I am sure that He has
Kept a place above
For a rose, daffodils,
And all that we love.

And I think, in Heaven,
I would slip away
From the shining angels
To this place to pray.

I would kneel and worship
By a crumbling wall
Over which red roses—
Like dim music—fall.

I would kneel and listen
To the Poplar trees
Whispering lost secrets
To a little breeze.

And the angels' anthem
Would not sound more sweet
Than the song of crickets
Underneath my feet.

O! I think, in Heaven,
God must sometimes go
Apart from the people
With garments like snow.

I am sure that, sometimes,
God must slip away
From all of those people
To this place to pray.

And, perhaps, I'll meet Him
By a crumbling wall
Over which red roses—
Like dim music—fall.

IN A GARDEN

Sometimes I think that I can hear
A flower's thoughts. I kneel
Close to a rose and listen, and
Sometimes I seem to feel
The petals tremble, and dim words—
So fleet and strange and low—
Bewilderingly passionate—
Are whispered me. I go
Through all the garden, listening,
And now I bend above
A violet. She peeps at me,
And in her heart is love.
Sometimes I stand among the tall
White hollyhocks, and wait,
And drink the fragrance of the wind,
And so communicate.
Sometimes I lean over a full
Young bud and swiftly kiss
The parted lips, and then I know
That God Himself does this.

A QUESTIONNAIRE

Have you ever run through Autumn woods
Along a little path hushed under leaves,
Brown, and pale gold, and flaming red,
And polished but on one side of themselves?

Have you ever laughed aloud to hear
The leaves talk softly underneath your feet?
Have you watched the fingers of the sun
Groping for swift beauty between the trees?

Have you ever stood in some still place
And flung your head back and looked at the sky
Until its blueness melted into you,
Until its clouds passed into your desires,
And all your spirit moved with clouds, and clung
To whiteness, and a shadowed radiance?

Have you ever lain in sun-hot grass
And almost heard the mystery of things
Uttered by the flowers and the bees?

Have you ever waited, breathlessly,
To understand the secret of a day?
To fold into your heart its messages
Of amber, and of silence, and of blue?

Have you ever walked alone at dusk
Beneath the shouting splendor of the stars,
Knowing not why sadness is, nor joy,
Nor beauty, nor the dim swiftness of years?

Have you ever stooped over a flower
And said "One of your petals is to me
More fair than all the kingdoms of the world!"
Or have you touched a flower with your lips
And known that you touched the heart of God?

Have you ever watched a Poplar tree
Balancing the moon upon its tip?
Have you ever marked a dull grey wave
Burst to sudden glory in a storm?
Have you ever listened to the wind
Chanting secret words through summer nights?

On blades of dewy grass have you observed
Sparks of blue and gold and red and green
Scattered by the morning, carelessly?

Have you ever laid your cheek against
The cool white body of a birch and felt—
Through muted ardours of young leaves—a stir—
The tremor of a passionate delight?

Have you ever loved?
I have! I have!

TO ONE GONE BLIND

Because you will not see again
The swift blue madness of the rain,
Nor the pale gold of early lights;
You—whom the ever-changing sights
Of beauty stirred with thankfulness
For every glimpse of loveliness . . .

Because you will not ever know
The powdered radiance of snow
Again, or watch frail clouds, with me,
Drift outward in eternity . . .
Because one flower standing up
With dew and sunshine in its cup,
No more shall fill your laughing eyes
With sudden rapture and surprise . . .

Since the fair scenes on which you gazed
Awhile, entranced—all things you praised—
All faces loved—have darkened, and
Left but queer symbols in your hand—
Is it because of this that He
(Whom seeing eyes yet do not see)
Walks in your heart? Thus do you find
A truer vision, being blind?

FAITH

I believe somehow, somewhere,
Beyond the edge of Here—
Beyond the brink of life and death
And time and hope and fear—

On some vast peak of silence,
In some white depth of space,
Across the blaze of setting suns
We shall meet, face to face;

Then all the youngest angels
Will fold their wings, and pray;
Even God—Himself a Lover—
Will smile and look away . . .

ANTICIPATION

Today is infinitely sweet
Because Tomorrow we shall meet.

Today is infinitely dear
Because it brings Tomorrow near.

Today is full of sun; the trees
Shake out fresh garments on the breeze,

And all the sky is blue—so blue
I scarcely can believe it true!

Today is full of little things
That sweep my heart, like angel's wings,

And every tremor of the grass,
And every dream of those who pass,

And every impulse everywhere
Is reproduced in me. I dare

All things today! I am so strong!
So full of life! So full of song!

Day that I love exquisitely,
Day that is bringing Love to me,

Why do you look afar, and sigh
As you go by? . . . as you go by?

EVEN-SONG

"Farewell, O Day, O lovely Day!"
The grasses, drooping gently, say . . .
Shouts of boys in the cherry trees—
Stained, laughing lips, and bare, scratched knees;
Wind in the branches, high and sweet,
And coolness welling underfeet . . .

"Farewell, O Day, O lovely Day!
Farewell, farewell!" The grasses say . . .
Songs of birds in the valley, low
Under the hill where lovers go
Hand in hand in the afternoon,
Hand in hand when the summer moon

Loosens her mantle, fold on fold,
And Youth seeks Youth, and hearts are bold . . .
"Farewell, O Day, O lovely Day!
Ah—wait! Go not!" The lovers say . . .
But earth is tremulous with things
That angels sprinkle from their wings . . .

SONNETS

I

How shall I write of you? How can I frame
In words, however jewelled, what you are?
There lingers such a glory in your name—
Your loveliness so secret is, and far!
Oh, I can praise the color of your eyes,
The sweetness of your laughter, and your face,
Full many lines of melody devise,
And in a song your words and gestures trace;
Or passionately I can touch the strings
Of life until, perchance, you smile, or weep,
And I can tell in poesy such things
As angels sometimes whisper in their sleep . . .
But more—ah, ever more than eyes can see,
Lips utter or ears hear—you are to me!

II

God! I must thank Thee for these unveiled skies—
This day—that like a lingering caress
Causes my heart to swoon, until it cries:
"Enough! I cannot bear more loveliness!"
For all the movings of the air are deep,
And long and slow and fragrant, like the breath
Of a young maiden beautiful in sleep,
Dreaming of love, and unconvinced of death.
God! I must thank Thee here, upon my knees,
Among the flowers that I part with care . . .
Beneath the splendid quietness of trees . . .
Warm earth upon my hands . . . wind in my hair . . .
Ah! Crush youth out, ye leaden-footed years!
But I have known today rapture and tears.

III

Here, in this little wood, the heart respires
Delight that in the palaces of Kings
It cannot know, and here the soul aspires
To God beyond the tyranny of things.
O sweet the motion of an upturned leaf!
Sweet the curves, the roots, the tips of grasses!
O sweet beyond all sense of joy or grief
The muted sound of wings as a bird passes!
Here, but to touch a flower is to love—
To gaze upon the sky, felicity;
And all that is below, about, above,
Gives up itself to rapture, quietly.
O Wisdom taught by Beauty in a wood—
So swiftly learned—so rarely understood!

IV

How strange it is to know that when the hand
That writes these words is dust—the words remain!
How hard it is—how hard to understand
We are less real than our own joy and pain!
For though you know it not, I know that when
Our hearts that beat so quickly are but air—
My song will live upon the lips of men
And prove to other ages you were fair.
Lovers in other lands, in distant times,
Reading these words will pause awhile and sigh . . .
Feeling your beauty steal between the rhymes . . .
Saddened to think that even you could die.
How strange it is, Dear Heart, knowing all this,
To know you do not know! Come, let us kiss. . .

V

I would not have the shadow of our love
Stir always in your heart, like broken wings;
For shadows are but shadows, and above
The darkness fly such glad, sun-tinted things!
I would not have you pause, nor cast one glance
Back through the dimming years in search of me.
Go on, Dear Heart! The hills of circumstance
Are high, and where I am you cannot see.
But if we had not missed the sweeter way . . . ?
If we had never stumbled, hand in hand?
Were we too young, too passionate, too gay,
Were we too wise—too wise to understand?
And yet, I would not have you hesitate,
Remembering. Day ends . . . and it is late. . .

VI

Must it be always thus? And is it true
That only in a deeper loss, we find?
Know light but by its absence, and the blue
Of Heaven prize more dearly being blind?
Must it be always thus? Therefore must we,
In seeking and in loving, always miss?
And even as our lips touch—suddenly
Become again as strangers in our kiss?
Or do you never feel the unseen Hand
That holds our souls apart when they would greet?
And do you never sadly understand
That we are then most distant when we meet?
Ah! You, I think, are strangely unaware—
Finding me present when I am not there.

VII

Life is not length of years, but instants fraught
With deepest sense of living, and to be
In love with beauty, and by beauty taught
An instant, is to know eternity.
For what is life? I would not, by the name,
Mere animal existence dignify,
And the sublimer meaning put to shame,
Calling that life which, living, seems to die.
Ah no! But this is life—to love, and while
Love is, is life, and when love ends, is death . . .
(You smile, Dear Heart—I know not why you smile—
Think you to live—that is but to draw breath?)
Come nearer! Touch my hand so . . . now you give
Me life, and only thus I truly live.

VIII

O Youth! Still I am yours! Still for an hour
My heart trembles beneath your swift caress!
Too willing captive am I to your pow'r,
Too eagerly I give, and you possess!
Through the blue dusk you come and, intently,
I listen for your step where lilies grow
Paler than dreams. In amongst them, gently,
Teach me, O Youth, the beauty that you know!
(Was it the wind that stirred? . . Was it a sigh . . . ?
The lilies bow their heads . . . the night is deep. . .
Was it a shadow touched us, and passed by?
Why are you sad, O Youth? Why do you weep?)
There falls a sound as of far Seraphim . . .
Then silence. Hush . . . the light of stars is dim . . .

IX

You are more fair than all fair things that be.
Your face more lovely is than Beauty's own.
Or you are Beauty. You are purity,
And innocence, and love. In you the tone
Of chords ineffable resolves in light—
Your presence is a melody so sweet
That what it is my pen can never write,
And earth breaks into perfume at your feet.
O happy flowers that your footsteps press!
Happy earth that prostrate is before you!
O happy, happy breezes that caress,
And, through fervent days and nights, adore you!
Would I were earth, or wind, or little flow'r,
That I might be as near you for an hour!

X

How many Poets seeking Beauty pause
Upon the outer threshold of the mind,
And fail to enter in to her because
They dare not leave the earth and time behind!
For Beauty will herself only reveal
Beyond the furthest reach of sound and sight,
Beyond all that we gaze upon and feel
Or understand by sensible delight.
She dwells apart; a flower is not she;
Nor is a dawn nor sunset; nor a star;
Nor is the summer wind; nor is the sea—
Nor even Youth—for all these beauties are
Reflections only—images that clod
The senses. Beauty is beyond—with God.

XI

Let me not seek among the Grecian hills,
Nor in the purple vales of Thessaly
For beauty other than this instant fills
The woods and fields that here encircle me.
Let me not search among strange Gods for one
More fair than Thou, O mocked and crucified!
Nor pipe vain songs to Pan when day is done.
Nor bend the knee to laughing Nymph espied.
But here, where sunlight moves across the green
Of spring-enchanted meadows, I would pray
To Thee alone, O saddened Nazarene,
And thank Thee for the glory of today.
No other God I worship—only Thee.
Fair are these vales as vales of Thessaly.

XII

A spray of lilac cold with morning dew . . .
A butterfly with pointed, shining wings . . .
A bluebird and a shadow and a few
Violets in a meadow—common things;
And wind among the Poplars, and the sight
Of country lovers in a country lane,
And Youth's presentiment of love's delight . . .
And beauty ending suddenly in pain . . .
Why do these things fall softly in my heart
Like petals drifting earthward, mute and dry?
Like fading petals—as they break apart
What is it in my heart that seems to die?
Ah, to so many things that pass we give
Up life so many times yet—strangely—live!

XIII

Though I go first, and though I pass the Gate
Of Paradise and see the great white Throne
Beyond, amid bowed Seraphim, I'll wait
For you, nor take another step alone.
For God will understand, I think, and say
"Let be. I know for whom she waits, and I
Love whom she loves." (Knowing the hidden way
Of hearts and that with death love does not die)
So I shall wait till, on the shining stair,
I hear your step, until your laughing eyes
Meet mine above the kneeling angels there,
And your voice questions, "Is this Paradise?"
Ah, then I'll take your hand and whisper, "Yes!
Let us go on to deeper Loveliness. . . ."

XIV

Was it a dream? Or did you lean one day
Out of the radiance in which you are?
And did you touch my hand, and did you say
"Hush . . .do not weep. Time ends. I am not far" . . . ?
Was it a dream? Or did your unbound hair
Drift round me like a perfumed mist at night?
And did you whisper "Life and Youth are fair,
But fairer is the dwelling-place of Light" . . . ?
It seemed to me from bliss to deeper bliss
I followed over earth and sea and sky . . .
You said "This is not Beauty—this, nor this—
For Beauty changes not, and these things die" . . .
I asked "What then is Beauty, understood?"
You bowed your head and said "It is the Good."

XV

Were I a Fairy Queen I'd build for you
A Citadel of Beauty, and therein
Place only what is ultimately true,
And bar the gates to death, and pain, and sin.
And I would say to you "Enter! And dwell
In beauty, for your soul was made for this—
Come through the fields of blowing asphodel,
And reign with me over the Realms of Bliss!"
But would you come? I know not, for you are
So tangled in the things of time that pass—
So tangled—like the image of a star
In water—like a flower in the grass . . .
Yet . . . is a star more lovely in the sky
Than mirrored in a little pool near by?

XVI

We kiss—and it is not the kiss I love.
We touch—and it is not your hand I seek—
But something that eludes—beneath, above
Each smile and sigh, and every word you speak.
O! Fairer than a smile, a sigh, a word,
Is the invisible delight of you!
And deeper than all that is seen or heard
Or felt this beauty is that I pursue!
Time has not pow'r to injure what you are.
Weep not for Youth when it has ceased to be;
But know that all the years can never mar
The loveliness that you reveal to me.
Though in the Potter's hand the clay grows cold,
And the vase shatters—He preserves the mold.

XVII

Am I in love with you? No, not with you,
But with that which in you the Love divine
Reflects, making what seemed illusion true—
A constant, sweet reminder, and a sign
That Love more vast than human love, and deep,
And Beauty fairer than all beauty seen,
Exists in God—and thus through you I keep
My faith in what the senses but demean.
For through your soul my soul has learned to pray,
And by your loveliness my heart has grown
Aware of Love and a sublimer Way,
And wisdom found that else it had not known.
You are the magic glass in which I see
God's face, and so are very dear to me.

XVIII

I wonder if you know that as you pass
The trees bend down to gaze into your face—
The daisies lift their heads out of the grass
And worship you, and that, in every place
You are there comes a sweetness and a light—
A more than light and sweetness—which my heart
Discovers, but my pen can never write?
Would I possessed the secret of all Art
That I might sing your loveliness and be
Not silent like a daisy or a stone,
Not mute before your beauty, like a tree!
(For what is love when it exists unknown?)
Ah, know beneath your footsteps as you pass
My heart is like a daisy in the grass!

XIX

Let me not pause too long, O God, before
The things of beauty by Thy hand displayed,
Nor form and line and coloring adore,
Forgetting thus the Maker in the made.
Let me not see one flower, but the thought
Of Thee, O God of flowers, is more real
Than petals which are so divinely wrought
Thy touch they most deliciously reveal.
And may I leave all loveliness behind,
The Source of loveliness thus to attain,
And in the Uncreated Beauty find
What in the universe were sought in vain.
Thy works, O God, are scattered everywhere—
What must Thou be Thyself—these are so fair!

XX

Yes, Youth, with curls ablow and dancing feet,
Will pass us by when we are least aware,
And there will come a silence when we meet,
And shadows will walk softly, everywhere . . .
We will not know—till Youth has passed us by—
How beautiful he was, nor comprehend—
Till we remember beauty with a sigh—
How even this has its appointed end.
Though life, remembered strangely after death,
Seem but the symbol of some fairer thing,
Will not the years on earth when we drew breath
Cost us a sigh, perhaps, remembering?
As by its loss we learn to know the Good,
So life, only by death, were understood. . . .

XXI

Away sweet Muse! I will not ease my pain
In thee, nor solace seek in thy caress!
For I remember what is not again,
And I must weep for vanished loveliness.
We know thou art the comforter of hearts
That break, yet in their breaking, turn to thee—
We know that out of suffering there starts
The flower of immortal Poesy.
And yet, O Muse, I would not at thy feet
Lay what is left of love, nor touch with rhyme
That which so fragile was, so mutely sweet
It could not bear the heaviness of Time.
Away, O Muse! Leave me uncomforted!
Why will you that I sing when love is dead?

PRAYERS

PRAYERS

Thy world, O God, a Poem is!
I do but imitate
The broken rhythms of Thy streams,
Thy bending trees, and harmonies
Of sunsets and of dreams.

Thy universe an Anthem is!
All that Thou can'st create—
Suns, systems, and a grain of dust
Fit, line on line, in the divine
Narration. O! I must

Gather the little words I find
Scattered around about . . .
Each fallen leaf, each curving bough
And flake of snow—all things that blow
Along the Here and Now.

Then as I read a single verse—
(So true, so perfect!) Doubt
In the superlative Design
That moulds my heart and every part
Of all I do resign.

Here let me pause upon this peak
Of Youth, ere yet
Mine eyes are dimmed with tears, and I
Pass, and forget
The multitudinous delights
Wherewith my life is brimmed—the sights,

Sounds, thoughts, and feelings that fill up
The instants' flight.
Author Unseen of Loveliness!
I would requite
Thy bounty with a Hymn of Praise!
Have I not watched Thy lovely ways

In little and supernal things?
Have I not caught
Thy whisper in the shadows, and
So lost, and sought,
And found again Thy sweetness in
My heart and other hearts? Begin

Then, Muse, strange Visitor, to spell
Words of my soul!
Come, and infuse, touch, and dispel
Darkness! Control
My measures, for I long to praise
The Author of my nights and days!

Nor would I thank Him for those gifts
That some do hold
So precious—crumbling gifts of Fame,
Power, and gold—
But I would thank Him for those things
Carelessly beautiful, He flings

To all—render Him thanks for these—
Bright leaves that fall
In perfumed mists and soundless tones;
Sunshine; the call
Of birds, inconstant and diverse;
The ways of wind; dreams that disperse

Black storms of doubt; for everything
That utters Thee
Remote and silent Being of Love!
Thee, who dost see
My heart crowded with things of sense,
Yet knowest that it did commence

To know—through these—(groping within,
Under, beyond,)
Thyself! O Essence Uncreated!
Thou too art fond
Of the inconsequential ways
Of little things through human days!

Thou too dost love, I think, the world—
Thou too dost pause
In twilight woodlands, listening . . .
To Thee each clause
Of Nature spells an infinite
Delight; Thou, dreaming bit by bit,

Hast called Time from Void—and all
That fills the hours;
O Thou alone did'st enter in
Before Powers,
Endings, Beginnings! Thou knewest

Substance of substances—drewest
Things huge and small and various
And fair and strange,
Forth from the centre of Thy thought,
To be, and change,
Circle in mutability,
And enter, once again, in Thee!

But as they pass before Thine eyes—
(Eyes veiled, serene—
Whose glance I know, sleepless and deep,
Yet have not seen)
Thou lovest, and Thy love descends
In torrents on the earth. It blends

With all, and urges us to love
Through Thee, with Thee,
Form, and its shadow; movement; light;
Infinity;
Substance, and space, and emptiness—
All, and its nothing—since no less

Nor more with Thee exists—O One
So vastly lone!
So vastly multitudinous!
Even a stone,
A leaf, a wave, a grain of sand—
Has known the caress of Thy hand!

All—all is fraught with Thee; and I—
I stand and gaze
In wonder, and my soul is caught
In Thee! My days
Are patterns between which I trace
The haunting sweetness of Thy face.

Thou, whom we label and deny—
Seek, and evade—
Thou, who remainest so strangely
Apart from shade
Of change—inexplicably here
And in me as I am—far, near,

Beholder unbeheld! For these—
Time, Light, and Life,
And growth, energy, and decay,
For peace and strife—
I thank Thee! Thou hast made aware
My soul of Thee—Thee, everywhere!

So that in all I love but Thee,
So that I seek
Thy love; and through all things I pass,
Hearing Thee speak,
And through all Faiths I learn to trust
My faith in Thee, and through the dust

Of death press forward, undaunted.
Thou art! Thou art!
Beauty is in Thy embraces!
And this is Art—
A glimpse of Thee—Thine accents heard—
Color and sound and form and word—

All these, if true, are fragments of
Thyself, of Truth . . .
If false, shall blow away at Dawn
With age, with youth . . .
Symbols of time, wan fugitives
That know not in Thy life, all lives.

O Treetops eloquent of things
I cannot say!

O Bird that to the morning sings,
And flies away . . .

O Star that utters breathless dreams,
And mutely dies . . .

O Wind that lifts the petals of
A rose, and sighs . . .

Speak, speak for me! My Lover waits;
Tell Him I come.

Speak, speak for me! He listens, and
My lips are dumb.

Tell Him I love Him, O Treetops,
O Wind, O Bird!

Tell Him I love Him, and tell me
That He has heard.

Dear Lord, Thou knowest that I know
Not anything, but that the snow
Is beautiful, a flower, too,
And morning blowing tones of blue . . .
Thou knowest, Lord, I understand
Not anything but that Thy hand
Sometimes, somehow, caresses me,
Although I cannot ever see
Thy face. Forgive me if I look
Not often in Thy sacred Book . . .
Are there not lovely, fragile things
In gardens—like an angel's wings?
And deep within a lily's cup
Hast Thou not put Dreams, looking up?

Thou knowest, Lord, I cannot find
Thee in long words that vex the mind,
But that I sometimes stumble close
To Thee when I inhale a rose . . .
Thou knowest; yet I pray Thee brush
Aside the lovely world, and hush
Its beauty for a little while.
Do Thou but look at me and smile!

I like the chapel best
When nobody is there—
When it is dim, and cool, and still—
Shadows everywhere . . .

I enter on tiptoe.
I kneel, and mean to pray,
But all my thoughts are little dreams
Without words to say.

Through the tinted windows
Drips a delicious light;
Faerie bands of vivid things go
Dancing, in delight.

Tall statues of the saints
Look on, and do not chide.
Young swallows in the ivy are
Chattering outside.

Swift, across the altar,
Like a sudden sigh,
Shadow-touch of tiny wings and
Petals blowing by . . .

High upon the altar,
Set in a slim blue vase,
Flowers that I picked at dawn and
Loved a thousand ways.

Listen, King of flowers,
Thou Watcher of all things,
Of worlds and suns no more aware
Than of sparrows' wings—

Break Thou my heart, O King!
It has not words for Thee—
But only loves. Thou, Who art Love,
Take me! Take me!

Lovely Lady dressed in blue,
Teach me how to pray!
God was just your little Boy—
Tell me what to say!

Did you lift Him up sometimes
Gently, on your knee?
Did you sing to Him the way
Mother does to me?

Did you hold His hand at night?
Did you ever try
Telling stories of the world?
O! and did He cry?

Do you think He really cares
If I tell Him things—
Little things that happen? And
Do the angels' wings

Make a noise? And can He hear
Me if I speak low?
Does He understand me now?
Tell me, for you know.

Lovely Lady dressed in blue,
Teach me how to pray—
He was just your little Boy,
And you know the way.

How is it possible to see
A rose, and still not worship Thee?
How is it possible to lean
Over its petals and, between,
Not catch a glimpse of Thee, O God,
Who creates roses out of sod?

How is it possible to kneel
Close to a flower, and not feel
Thy Presence Who art standing there,
And Who hast made what is so fair?
How is it possible to be
In love with roses, and not Thee?

Fountain, bubbling in the sunshine,
Your voice is sweeter, far, than mine!
Your words are made of dreams and silence—
Listen, will you praise my Love for me?

Flowers—imperious yellow daisies—
Roses, tumbling softly o'er the wall,
Hollyhocks demure and very stately,
And little flowers whose names I do not know—
You, who have ways of showing gladness,
You, who have learned to speak delight—
O! Show my Love my secret joy!
O! Tell my Love that I am His!

Birds, always singing in the forest,
Trees, swaying gently to their song,
Wind, running swiftly o'er the meadows,
Streams, laughing dimly in the hills—
O! Tell my Love that I am happy!
O! Speak my love unto my Love!

The world has dressed herself in green
For my Beloved's sake,
And put Spring flowers in her hair.
The dogwood blossoms break

In fervent whiteness open, and
The hills are warm and sweet.
The earth is tremulous with life
Beneath my eager feet.

The flowers know as well as I
'Tis my Beloved's day—
The flowers know it, and the sky
And earth and all things pray

To Him by being beautiful.
The shining lilies lean
Heavy with fragrance, and the sun
Clean fingers thrust between.

The lark rushes against the sky
And flings away his song.
The meadow-grasses shift and sigh,
The big clouds float along . . .

I walk with rapture in my heart.
The trees stoop over me.
The flowers lift their little heads
And think I do not see.

I walk with rapture in my heart
On my Beloved's day,
And wish that I could pray to Him
The way that flowers pray.

I wish that I could pray to Him
As simply as a bird.
I wish that all I am might be
A prayer that He has heard!

Teach me to pray, O World!
Your flowing streams,
Your bending trees,
Your wind-touched dreams!
Here, on my knees,
Deep in the tall Spring grass, I say:
"Teach me to pray . . . teach me to pray . . ."

For in the stir of leaves,
In rippled grass,
In field and wood,
In clouds that pass . . .
Words understood
Dimly by men, you speak, yet they
Are beautiful; through them you pray.

Teach me, O World, your prayer!
I too would lift
My voice and be
Lost in the gift
Of melody!
I too, within your Hymn of Praise
One little note of love would raise.

Sound in my heart Thy hastening feet,
O eager Lover, strong and fleet!

Sounds in my soul Thy pleading voice
"Time or eternity—thy choice?"

Lover imperious and unseen,
Lord of what shall be or has been—

Why dost Thou seek relentlessly
This atom in immensity?

Lo! I have fled Thee everywhere!
Yet in all hidings, Thou art there.

Blind with the beauty of Thy face,
Stumbling away from Thy embrace,

Snatching at shadows, wild with fear
Lest Thou, my Lord, shouldst come too near—

Still those persistent, weary feet
Beat in my heart, and still Thy sweet

Voice calls my name. Ah Lord, I stand
And wait, at last. . . Take Thou my hand

And draw me to Thee, nor release
Till I have felt the kiss of Peace.

Dear Lord, Thou knowest when I pray
I have not many words to say;
I do but kneel and offer Thee
All that I am, all I might be.

Do others render Thee more praise
With eloquent gesture and phrase?
I only dare to clasp Thy feet.
I only know that Thou art sweet.

Teach me, dear Lord, Thyself to find
In every lovely thing;
Touch Thou mine eyes, for they are blind;
Teach Thou my heart to sing!

I cannot ever know Thee, Lord,
Unless Thou aidest me.
I grope in darkness for Thy hand—
"Lord, Lord, that I may see!"

Stoop down and whisper in my heart
"Fear not, for I am near . . ."
But when Thou speakest—then, O then
Enable me to hear!

If, dying, I do never see *
Tall angels bending over me
With fluted wings,
Nor ever hear
The song they say an angel sings
For those who fear . . .

And if I do not feel your hand—
Lord of the things none understand—
As I depart . . .
Yet may my heart
Be filled with love—not bitterness—
And dying, give me strength to bless
Each moment lived—may I recall
Life's rapturous, swift days, and all
That I have treasured on the way
Through Time—this be the prayer I pray:

I offer thanks, O God, to Thee
For all that was, is, or shall be,
And render back Thy gift. Behold!
It is a story that is told . . .
And amid all the lives that pass
'Tis but a tremor in the grass . . .

Yet Lord, I loved it, through its pain,
Bewilderment, and sin. O deign
Then as I leave that which is mine
And journey on to what is Thine,
That, in this instant, I may see
Again all that is dear to me . . .

Wide fields with daisies nodding late,
And hills that greenly undulate,
And skies so young they blush to fall
Into pale morning's arms—hear all
The strange, sweet, eager, endless sounds
Of summer nights—the secret rounds
Of tiny lives. And may I feel
Sharpened blue shadows dip and steal
Across soft silence; on my face
The touch of flowers, and the lace
Of sunlight strained through moving leaves,
And the long kiss of love that grieves.

O! I have loved the little songs
Of little birds, and all the throngs
Of little bodies hurrying
Between the Winter and the Spring!

No hour too long wherein I lay
Beneath the tasselled, ripened hay,
And felt the sunshine crushing me
With sweetness, and the ecstasy
Of the red earth, whose heart-throbs beat
Vigor into fresh fields of wheat!

No hour too long wherein to dream
By some forgotten mountain stream
And watch the ways of butterflies
Or of a leaf, before it dies.

So as I reach the end of Here,
The brink of Timelessness—not fear,
Despair, nor sadness may I know—
But only Love. Then smile, and go . . .

*Awarded Browning Medal.

Dennis reaction — to
trip to Bakersfield flower
fields —

"the blue lupin was like
a vast sea —
the white bradea were
the white caps —
the pinks, yellows
lavenders, & the
other flowers — were
the (iridescence) the
colors of the mermaid
on the waters."

[THE END

Ojai Calif. April 7 — 1927

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